ローリー ゲイ　　*ROWLEY Gaye*

Gitte Marianne Hansen 著
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『日本における女らしさ、自傷行為、摂食障害：文学及び視覚文化における矛盾』

Normative gender is a feature of all human societies, and our struggles to conform to—or contest—the norms our society has developed begin as soon as we become conscious of ourselves as gendered. Men as well as women face contradictory demands as they become aware of what is required of them: corporate warrior vs. devoted husband and father, desirable object vs. self-sacrificing subject are only several of the many contradictions we may be familiar with. Gitte Marianne Hansen's first book is a fascinating collection of essays that examines the relationship between normative femininity and self-directed violence in contemporary Japan. Her analysis is framed by three questions: What constitutes normative femininity? How has normative femininity been represented in Japanese culture, both narrative and visual? How does self-directed violence relate to this norm? (p. 3) From time to time Hansen looks back to the past, but the focus of her analysis is firmly on contemporary Japanese culture since the 1980s.

Part I, "Normativity," begins with a chapter that explores the "chaos of contemporary normative Japanese femininity" (p. 44) and introduces the concepts of "contradictive femininity" and the "gender leash" that she employs throughout her analysis. Contradictive femininity refers to the

multiple and complex set of roles that women must learn to navigate and perform. The gender leash is a concept first articulated by the Danish scholar Dorthe Marie Søndergaarde, and is a way of measuring the lengths women go to as they develop strategies to perform gender differently in different contexts: the gender leash may be longer or shorter, depending on where women live, their level of education, the nature of the work they do, their social position at any given time, and so on, but women are never entirely "off the leash." Hansen argues that Japanese women seem more aware than women from other social backgrounds that normative gender is learned and can be accomplished through effort (p. 31).

Throughout her book, Hansen's analysis encompasses how men, as well as women, have imagined women's lives and worlds. As she states, "fictional female characters created by women are no less fictive than those produced by men" (p. 18); and "what I am interested in is not the 'who' that produces, but the 'how' and the 'what'" (p. 19). To that end, in chapter 3 Hansen analyzes the two Nanas in Yazawa Ai's manga *NANA* (2000-9); Kon Satoshi's anime *Papurika* (2006); and the TV drama *Araundo 40: chūmon no ōi onnatachi* (2008), showing how the addition of another character to a story enables authors to explore contradictive femininity, that is, the demands on contemporary Japanese women to be both lovable objects and sexual subjects, to perform successfully in both the domestic and the social worlds. The expectation that women can and should "have it all" has been around at least since the publication, in 1982, of *Having It All*, by the American editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine Helen Gurley Brown (1922-2012). Hansen trains her acute analytic eye on how this demand has been explored by Japanese writers, artists, and producers of popular culture.

In chapter 4, Hansen analyzes Kawakami Mieko's *Chichi to ran* (2007) as

a rewriting of Higuchi Ichiyō's *Takekurabe* (1895-96), Otsuichi's (a.k.a. Adachi Hirotaka) "Mukashi yūhi no kōen de" (2001) as a rewriting of Abe Kōbō's *Suna no onna* (1962), and compares television commercials for the JR Tōkai Shinkansen from the bubble (1988, 1989) and post-bubble (2000) eras. She argues that Kawakami and Otsuichi use their rewritings of earlier literature to show how female characters and by extension real women remain "tied down by historical traditions that are difficult to overcome" (p. 80).

Chapter 5 looks at "transforming characters," beginning with the multiple competences specified by Bandō Mariko in her *Josei no hinkaku* (2006): mother, wife, homemaker, paid worker, volunteer, consumer, loyal friend, and expert in the classics. Such competences are contradictory, and just how the numerous transformations they require can be achieved within the limits of one woman's 24-hour day is never revealed. The opposite is the case in Anno Moyoco's manga *Hataraki-man* (2004-7), where the tabloid journalist Matsukata Hiroko is vividly depicted turning on her "male switch" and going into "working mode." There is also a discussion of the television drama *Bara iro no seisen* (2011), which depicts Miki Makoto's unlikely transformation from housewife to supermodel, and Murakami Haruki's bleak story "Nemuri" (1989), which exposes as a nightmare "the demand for female transformativity that contradictive femininity and housewife feminism has brought women" (p. 105).

In Part II, "Self-directed violence," we are in altogether darker territory. In chapter 6, Hansen revisits some of the characters examined in Part I and argues that "Japanese women's eating disorders and self-harm should be interpreted as alternative, albeit non-normative, strategies for performing contradictive femininity" (pp. 117, 131). Chapter 7 develops a series of analytical markers

that she hopes might be used to "bridge the gap between cultural studies and clinical research on eating disorders and self-harm" (p. 140). These markers include feeling dirty, escape (from the category "woman"), and the body as alien invader that must be kept under control. Chapter 8 analyzes two works not explicitly about eating disorders and self-harm—Miyazaki Hayao's full-length anime *Sen to Chihiro no kamikakushi* (2001) and Murakami Haruki's short story "Midori no iro no komono" (1991)—and argues that these themes are nonetheless embedded in the narratives. As Hansen points out, Murakami's stories have been criticized for objectifying women and failing to resist patriarchy; here, she shows how Murakami uses a female narrator to explore "self-directed violence as a strategy to deal with feelings of isolation and fragmentation" (p. 175), and convincingly challenges the dominant discourse about Murakami's work.

Chapter 9 restates the main arguments of the book and sets out Hansen's conclusions. Slimness and the ability to tolerate pain are "essential competences to be normal" and thus "paradoxically, the pathological is part of the normative" (p. 183). Some of the works of literature and popular culture that Hansen examines expose, criticize, and problematize contradictive femininity; others are part of the problem: they naturalize, even idealize, eating disorders and self-harm as strategies for navigating the contradictory requirements of contemporary femininity.

Although Hansen's principal concern in *Femininity, Self-harm and Eating Disorders in Japan* is representations of women, real women are never far away: there are illuminating discussions of the all-girl music group AKB 48, the national football team Nadeshiko Japan, as well as the incidence of suicide, eating disorders, and other forms of self-harm in contemporary Japan. Her text is usefully illustrated with numerous examples from the artwork and manga

she discusses, and further examples are available on websites the reader is directed to in the chapter endnotes.

From time to time I felt that Hansen might have spelt out the political implications of her analysis of Japanese popular culture a bit more. Kanehara Hitomi's novels *Hebi ni piasu* (2003), *Asshu beibii* (2004), and *Haidora* (2007), for example, all feature young women whose sole achievement is to be thin=beautiful and thus able to trade sex with men/their boyfriends for a place to live. What does the popular success of these stories—some of which have spawned manga and movie versions—say about contemporary Japan? In the end, Hansen remains a detached, albeit sympathetic, observer of the scene, and this is certainly no flaw in a book written for an academic audience. Nonetheless, I can't help recalling Naomi Wolf, who argued in *The Beauty Myth* (1990; 邦訳『美の陰謀』, 1994), that "a culture fixated on female thinness is not an obsession about female beauty, but an obsession about female obedience."